

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Click it or Ticket!

Pierce County Trooper Selected To Participate In Forum For Alaska's New Seatbelt Law

Trooper Kelly Kalmbach was recently selected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to be part of a panel of police officers to assist Alaska law enforcement officers with the adoption of their new seat belt law as a primary enforcement tool. Trooper Kalmbach, 47, has worked East Pierce County for all of her 5 year career with the Washington State Patrol. Trooper Kalmbach was recognized by NHTSA in 2005 for writing over 500 seatbelt tickets. She also received an award from "Night of a Thousand Stars" which recognized officers who demonstrated a high arrest rate for impaired drivers and seatbelt violations.

Because of her efforts, Trooper Kalmbach was one of four panel members which included an officer from Idaho and two officers from Alaska. The panel gave advice and suggestions of how to aggressively enforce the seatbelt law. Kalmbach stated, "It's all about safety, seatbelts save lives and reduce injuries." Alaska currently has a seatbelt percentage of approximately 60 percent. They are now adopting a seatbelt as a primary violation with hopes of increasing that percentage. Trooper Kalmbach will be one of many troopers out on the road in Pierce and Thurston County for the 2006 "Click it or Ticket" campaign.

Between **May 15 and June 3**, The Washington State Patrol will be teaming up with other law enforcement officers throughout Washington State to look for drivers who aren't buckled up during the Click it or Ticket campaign.

During the last three years of May Click it or Ticket emphasis patrols, 30,749 seat belt tickets have been written statewide and last May, law enforcement officers cited 10,107 non-seatbelt wearers. The ticket for not wearing a seatbelt carries a fine of \$101.

In August 2001, before the primary seat belt law went into effect, approximately 83% of drivers wore seatbelts. Thankfully, today we have the second highest seatbelt compliance rates in the nation (95.2%). Studies show that seat belts reduce serious injuries by 69% and deaths by 45% - 70%.

After the adoption of the Click it or Ticket project and the primary enforcement seat belt law, the vehicle occupant death number dropped from 517 in 2002 to 419 in 2004 – nearly 100 lives were saved due to increases in seat belt use. Traffic safety officials estimate that for every fatality avoided, about four serious injuries are avoided as well.

“The evidence is overwhelming that seatbelts save lives,” explained WSP Chief John R. Batiste. “Our ultimate goal is to save lives, and we hope that our renewed effort to remind drivers in Washington to buckle up will reduce the injuries and fatalities on our roadways.”

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